International Competencies for CCSU Students

Central Connecticut State University is proud of its commitment to international education and is pleased to present the following list of International Competencies that are expected of all students who study overseas.

KNOWLEDGE

Students will be able to explain the complexity and interdependency of global events and issues by demonstrating:

1.1 knowledge of world geography;
1.2 knowledge of world history;
1.3 an understanding of diversity of values, beliefs, ideas, and world views;
1.4 an understanding of one’s own culture and its relationship to the rest of the world;
1.5 knowledge of a foreign language.

ATTITUDES

Students will value and respect intercultural and global diversity by exhibiting:

2.1 curiosity and openness toward new opportunities, ideas and ways of thinking;
2.2 an awareness of ethnic and cultural differences;
2.3 the ability to examine issues objectively and without prejudice;
2.4 appreciation for multiple perspectives;
2.5 an awareness of one’s own identity and culture.

SKILLS

Students will act as global citizens by:

3.1 thinking critically and creatively and integrating knowledge of the world;
3.2 communicating effectively, including using a foreign language, and interacting with people from other cultures;
3.3 coping with unfamiliar and challenging settings with resiliency;
3.4 locating information and investigating issues about international topics.
IMPORTANT NOTE

This Survival Guide is an important tool that includes everything you need to know to prepare for your international education experience.

It includes information about plane tickets, travel documents, insurance, a suggested packing list, some suggestions concerning finances, some resources on safety and traveling abroad, and details on CCSU’s policies that pertain to Study Abroad.

The guide is required reading for your Study Abroad experience. Before you leave, it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the information in this booklet so that your overseas experience is a healthy and happy one.

Please be sure to read through the entire Guide and use it from the time you are accepted to the program, as you are getting ready to leave, while you are abroad, and even after you return home. And do not hesitate to contact the CIE with any questions.

For more information

CIE front desk: 860-832-2040

www.ccsu.edu/cie

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the following organizations that provided essential text and information for this Survival Guide:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Office for International Academic Programs at the University of Wisconsin – Madison

School for Field Studies (Salem, MA)

University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center

University of Southern California Center for Global Education

U. S. Department of State
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PREPARATION CHECKLIST

☐ Before you leave, be sure to submit your signed Study Abroad Credit Pre-Approval Form!

   NOTE: Credits earned abroad at CCSU Partner Universities, GlobaLinks Affiliates, or ISEP are counted as residency credit at CCSU, not as transfer credits. As of summer 2013, grades earned abroad will appear on your CCSU transcript and calculate into your GPA.

☐ Obtain a passport, or check to make sure your passport is valid.

☐ Obtain visa for entry into host country, if necessary.

☐ Make sure your bank and/or credit card companies know you will be using your card(s) abroad.

☐ Register your travel on the U.S. Department of State’s free “Travel Registration” page at https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/.

☐ If you are a permanent resident of the U.S. or an international student returning to school in the U.S. after the program, be sure to have the necessary documentation for re-entry into the United States.

☐ Contact CCSU students who have returned from a Study Abroad to learn more about what to expect.

☐ Make travel arrangements and make sure your arrangements meet scheduled arrival times, if specified by your host university.

☐ Know the address of your host university and take it with you.

☐ Consult with your doctor and be sure to review the following:

   1. Your immunization history and requirements for your travel destination
   2. Your general fitness level
   3. Medications and prescriptions. You will want to take medications in sufficient quantities and in their original containers. Check with your insurance company about filling prescriptions several months in advance, since you may not be able to find the medicine you need in-country.
   4. Any changes in treatment programs (mental health and physical health) that may be necessary while you are abroad
   5. The health risks for each place where you’ll be going

☐ Make sure you have health insurance. CCSU requires all students attending CCSU and participating in a CCSU Study Abroad program to be enrolled in a medical plan.

☐ Check with your healthcare provider to make certain that your policy offers coverage outside of the United States and specifically in the places where you are going. The evacuation and repatriation insurance that you receive from CCSU is not medical or dental insurance.

☐ Leave a contact address for friends and family.

☐ Make two clear copies of your plane ticket and your passport. Take one copy with you and leave one copy with a friend or family member. It is also a good idea to scan the information page of your passport and email it to yourself. Then you can access your email and print a copy, if necessary.

☐ Inquire about adding an international plan to your cell phone.
TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORT

You must have a passport to enter all of the countries where Study Abroad programs take place. Make certain that your passport is valid until at least SIX MONTHS after the end date of your Study Abroad program!

- If you have a passport, find it! Don’t just think you know where it is!
- Check the expiration date now; it must be valid for 6 months beyond the return date.
- If you need to apply for a new passport or renew a passport, visit the State Department’s website for procedural information – http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.
- Expedited processing is available for an additional fee, but it is an inconvenient and expensive process.
- If there is a discrepancy, especially one involving how your name appears in the CCSU student database and how it appears on your passport, inform CIE staff immediately.
- Bring both your passport and a photocopy of the information page of your passport with you on your trip. Leave additional copies at home with a family member or friend and with the CIE.
- If you lose your passport, contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate immediately to begin the process of replacing it.

AIRLINE TICKET

- Your airline ticket may be a traditional “paper ticket” or, more likely, an electronic ticket.
- If you are issued a paper ticket, you must bring this ticket to the departure airport with you!
- If you are issued an electronic ticket, you may check in for your flight at the airport by showing proper identification (your passport).
- Be sure to keep your passport and airline tickets together in a secure place, and whatever you do, do not leave them home!
- Upon receipt of your airline tickets, check the spelling of your name compared to how your name appears on your passport.

VISA

- A travel visa is a document that allows you entry into a particular foreign country or group of countries.
- Not all countries require travelers to have a visa.
- The need for a visa is determined by what country’s passport you hold and where you are traveling.
- Students are responsible for applying for and paying for all visa fees and in some instances must travel to New York or Boston to apply for the visa in person.

GREEN CARDS

- If you are a resident alien in the United States (a foreign-born individual who has been granted residency status in the U.S., but who is not yet a citizen), you must bring your original “green card” with you in order to re-enter the United States. Do not travel without it!
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IDENTITY CARD (ISIC) (Optional)

- The ISIC is an identification card that certifies full-time student status at an institution of higher learning and is recognized in most areas of the world.
- The card provides students with discounts, extra travel insurance, and access to an emergency help line.
- To obtain a card or get more information go to: [http://www.myisic.com/MyISIC/](http://www.myisic.com/MyISIC/) or [www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com)

MAKING YOUR TRAVEL PLANS

You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements and for paying for your travel to and from your Study Abroad program. You may wish to book your ticket over the Internet or through your local travel agent.

If your host university provides an airport pickup service, be sure to arrive at the pickup location on time! If you miss the group pickup time, you will most likely be responsible for getting to the host university on your own.

CCSU is not responsible for reimbursing travel expenses for programs cancelled or rescheduled due to acts of war or civil unrest, acts of God, strikes, weather, quarantine/epidemics/sickness, government regulations, or failure of equipment, power or communications.

If you opt to travel before or after your program, be sure to check with immigration officials regarding your visa status. It is a great idea to arrange all your travel before you leave because it can be difficult and expensive to exchange tickets.

Be sure to join a frequent flyer program! Also, check with your agent about multiple stops or stopovers; long trips are an excellent opportunity to see other countries or regions for a small fee or at no extra cost, but this usually needs to be arranged at the time of ticket purchase.
YOUR LUGGAGE

If your bags are delayed in travel, you should complete a lost baggage form at the airline baggage office after clearing Customs. Ask to have bags routed to your host university. It is not unusual for bags to get delayed in transit; they usually show up within two days. Be sure to have your host university’s address written on all luggage tags as well as taped inside your luggage.

Pack your carry-on bag carefully: a change of clothes, basic toiletries and essential medications, one warm garment, your camera, and any other essential items that would be needed to survive for two days after arrival; luggage is occasionally misplaced for that long and can be delayed longer. Test-pack your belongings to make sure you meet baggage requirements. Generally, one is limited to one carry-on bag and one checked item. Extra baggage charges can be in the hundreds of dollars, especially if they exceed weight limitations specified by the airline. However, policies differ by airline and are prone to changes so please check baggage limitations with your air carrier(s). Additionally, make sure that you can carry all of your belongings without assistance – and leave some space for souvenirs! Keep in mind that luggage must be left unlocked, so you should leave valuables at home or keep them with you in your carry-on bag. Never pack your car or house/room keys in luggage that will be checked (and might be delayed or lost).

ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

Outlets and electrical voltage vary from country to country. Please check on this before buying a converter or adapter. Some electronics, including most computers, can handle different voltage within a certain range and simply need an adapter to go from an American plug to a foreign-shaped plug, but others cannot and need to go through a voltage converter before connecting. These converters can be found at most electronic stores. It is best to check on the back of each device for the line “INPUT: 100-240” or the like. If the electrical voltage in the country you will be visiting falls within the range listed on your electronic device then you just need an adapter. If it does not fall in this range, you will also need a converter. Adapters (for different-shaped plugs) are usually available for purchase in your host country, but you should bring a voltage converter with you from the U.S.

PACKING LIST (some suggested items)

- Clothes – take clothing that can be worn in layers
- Alarm clock
- Small umbrella
- Laptop
- Adapter/converter set
- Comfortable shoes
- Money belt
- Camera
- iPod with charger
- Journal
- Small gifts – in certain cases, it may be suitable to bring a small gift (e.g. host family)
- Toiletries
- Small Repair Kit - needle, thread, safety pins, etc
- Daypack - small backpack suitable for day or weekend trips
- Over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol. Many familiar brands are not common overseas, so bring such medications if needed.
- Communication sheet – knowing key words and phrases in the language of your destination(s) at the time you arrive is very useful! You can find sample communication sheets at www.studentsabroad.com/infosheet.asp
WHAT TO LEAVE HOME

- Any valuables or sentimental items you could not stand to lose
- Ripped jeans/clothing
- Anything bearing a U.S. logo or the U.S. flag

AIRPORT CHECK-IN

- Airports employ heightened security measures.
- Take all signs, directions, and interactions with airport personnel seriously.
- Do not make jokes about airport safety anywhere in the airport.
- If you are identified for additional screening procedures, be sure to stay in possession of your passport at all times.
- Do not ever become separated from your passport.
- Never accept or watch items or baggage for someone you do not know.

CUSTOMS DECLARATION

On the plane, when you return to the United States, you will be asked to fill out a “Customs Declaration” form. Be prepared to list the items that you purchased while overseas and to estimate the monetary value of those items. If you purchased items worth $800 or less you will not be charged duty (tax) on those items. If you have questions, you should consult the website of the U. S. Customs and Border Protection service at: http://cbp.gov/
INSURANCE

HEALTH INSURANCE

Students are required to carry health insurance valid in the country or countries of program operation. You will not be allowed to participate in a CCSU Study Abroad program without providing proof of coverage. Some insurance carriers do not cover out-of-country medical expenses. Therefore, you should ensure that your medical policy offers coverage outside of the United States and specifically in the country where you will study abroad. Those insurance companies that do provide international coverage often do so on a reimbursable basis. Many foreign public or private hospitals and clinics will not accept insurance for payment. In most cases, you will need to pay with cash or by credit card at the time of your office visit or procedure. This means that you will need to have a valid credit card to pay for your medical expenses up front and then request reimbursement from your insurance company.

If you require medical attention at any time during your Study Abroad program, you will be liable for all medical expenses incurred.

PERSONAL PROPERTY INSURANCE

CCSU insurance does not cover the personal property of students. You may wish to check your or your parent’s current policies or purchase additional insurance, if this is a concern.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

CCSU insurance does not provide travel insurance or cover travel cancellation or other travel-related claims. If you wish to purchase such coverage, check with your travel agent for more information.

MEDICAL EVACUATION AND REPATRIATION INSURANCE

CCSU enrolls students in an emergency medical evacuation and repatriation insurance policy. This insurance is required and will be effective for the duration of the program. Note: This is not the same as health/medical or dental insurance!

Benefits include, but are not limited to:

- Prescription Drug Replacement Assistance
- Dispatch of Physician
- Unlimited Emergency Medical Evacuation
- Unlimited Medical Repatriation
- Visit by Family Member/Friend during hospitalization
- $2,500 Emergency Return Home coverage in the event of death or life threatening illness of a parent of sibling

The travel assistance benefits are provided by On-Call International, staffed 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Some of the services that can be accessed through On-Call International include:

- 24/7 Emergency Travel Arrangements
- Translation Assistance
- Emergency Travel Funds Assistance
- Lost Travel Documents Assistance
- Assistance with Replacements of Credit Card/Travelers Checks
- Navigate to: [http://www.aetnastudenthealth.com/](http://www.aetnastudenthealth.com/); enter “Central Connecticut State University” under “Find School”; Click on “Print ID Card”; complete form and print

STAYING SAFE

Learning to observe and interpret what is going on around you is a desirable skill that may enable you to effectively minimize risks, make better-informed decisions, and mitigate the consequences of undesirable events. Like most skills, it takes some time to develop. The following section will help guide your behavior while you are learning and help facilitate the process.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE RESOURCES

- **Sign up for the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program so the State Department can better assist you in an emergency:** Let the State Department know your travel plans through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, a free online service at [https://travelregistration.state.gov/](https://travelregistration.state.gov/). This will help them contact you if there is a family emergency in the U.S., or if there is a crisis where you are traveling. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare and whereabouts will not be released to others without your express authorization.

- **A website specifically for students who travel or reside abroad:** [www.studentsabroad.state.gov](http://www.studentsabroad.state.gov). Additional student travel safety tips provided at: [www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html)

- **Contact us in an emergency:** Consular personnel at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad and in the U.S. are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Contact information for U.S. Embassies and Consulates appears on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website at [http://travel.state.gov/](http://travel.state.gov/). Also note that the Office of Overseas Citizen Services in the State Department’s Bureau of Consular Affairs may be reached for assistance with emergencies at 1-888-407-4747, if calling from the U.S. or Canada, or 202-501-4444, if calling from overseas.

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

- U.S. State Department Country by Country Background Notes: [http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/)
- U.S. Embassies and Consulates: [http://usembassy.state.gov/](http://usembassy.state.gov/)

OTHER GOVERNMENT FOREIGN AFFAIRS SITES

The following sites contain information on travel advisories, the political situation, laws, medical facilities, crime, political strife, terrorism, etc:

- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)
- United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

BEST PRACTICES FOR REDUCING PERSONAL SAFETY RISKS

BE AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS

- Pay attention to what people around you are saying.
- Find out which areas of the city are less safe than others.
- Know which hours of night are considered more dangerous.
- Stay and walk only in well-lit areas.
- Avoid being alone in unfamiliar neighborhoods.
- Know where to get help (police station, fire station, phones, stores, etc.).
- Do not touch suspicious items like letters or packages mailed to you from someone you don’t know.
- Know what is "normal" and "not normal" to see on a daily basis in the areas you frequent.
- Do not respond to explosions or gunfire by going to a window; seek cover away from windows and exterior walls.

PERSONAL SAFETY FOR FEMALE TRAVELERS

Female students may or may not have thought about what it might mean to live as a woman in the country in which you will be studying abroad, but we encourage you to do so. While it is impossible to generalize about the experience of women traveling in all places in the world, you may experience some gender-specific challenges when you live or travel abroad. This is not to say that it is more dangerous to be a woman elsewhere in the world. However, language and cultural differences might mean what you consider appropriate behavior for a woman in the U.S. will be interpreted much differently by the men – and women – of your host country. This is further compounded by the fact that the people in some other countries may have distorted or stereotyped notions about American women, based on images acquired through American films and advertising. The very characteristics of American women such as independence and strength may be conceived differently in other countries.

A smile, eye contact, certain clothing, or the way you carry yourself can connote different things in different cultures. Please be aware that over consuming alcohol can especially put women in unsafe circumstances. Women who are publicly drunk may be looked at differently abroad than in the U.S. While we will supply you with what information we can, you are your own best resource. Read travel guides or articles and talk to women who have been to your host country. The more familiar you are with the customs and traditions of your host country, the more understanding you will have for why they exist and the safer you will feel while abroad.

APPROPRIATE ATTIRE

In some countries, wearing the wrong clothes can get you arrested or lead to a dangerous situation for both men and women. What you think is casual may actually be considered provocative or unacceptable in other cultures. Know before you go, and pack accordingly. On arrival, note what locals are wearing and try to follow their lead. Women especially
should stay away from anything too revealing or tight and avoid wearing excessive makeup. Any fashion statement you DO make should show consideration for the country you are visiting.

**JEWELRY AND OTHER VALUABLES**

Whenever you travel, be careful with your valuables. Leave your good jewelry at home, and keep money in a safe place such as a money belt or hidden pouch under your clothes. Keep a low profile with regard to your camera and electronic equipment, and keep your bags with you at all times.

**KEEPING IN CONTROL**

In addition to the circumstances involved with being new in a foreign country, which are often beyond one’s immediate control, there are many situations that you can control. Some controllable factors that place you at greatest risk include:

- Being out after midnight;
- Being alone at night in an isolated area;
- Being in a known high-crime area;
- Sleeping in an unlocked place;
- Being out after a local curfew;
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

**INCREASED RISK UPON ARRIVAL**

Travelers, especially those having just arrived abroad, are often targets of crime and at higher risk of harm, because they:

- Are naive to the intentions of people around them;
- Are carrying all their valuables with them when they first step off the plane, train, or boat.

**UNDERSTANDING LOCALS**

Inform yourself about your new environment, making use of as many different sources as possible – the Internet, the library, television and radio news programs, and the newspaper. A stronger grasp of the local language will help you, but even a few essential phrases can be immensely beneficial. Make it a point to try to understand what locals are communicating to you, how they feel about you and about U.S. citizens in general, how you are fitting with their values, and how well you understand them.

**EFFECTS OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY**

The foreign policy of the U.S. can be offensive to citizens of foreign countries. In some cases, Americans living or traveling abroad can be targets of the frustrations of these individuals. Consider the nature of the political climate and relations between the U.S. and the countries you plan to visit. Avoid political rallies, which can increase tensions and emotions or breed angry mobs for which a U.S. citizen may serve as a scapegoat.

**NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

Non-verbal communication (such as body language and hand gestures) which is considered harmless in the U.S. may be offensive to people in other countries. The list of gestures considered rude in other countries can grow beyond the obvious.

**PRECAUTIONS WHEN ACCEPTING FOOD AND DRINK**

Be cautious about accepting drinks, alcoholic or non-alcoholic, from a stranger. Likewise, be sensible when a stranger offers you food. Do not leave drinks unattended and return to them in restaurants or bars.
CONSENSUAL SEX

Keep yourself free from sexually-transmitted diseases by using protection (like condoms or abstinence). Also, remember that “no” may not always be interpreted as “no” in other countries. Inform yourself about the types of diseases prevalent in the area in which you are traveling. Unprotected sex puts one at risk for acquiring a sexually-transmitted disease, including HIV. Traveling abroad can be romantic - beautiful scenery, a new culture, none of the constraints of home. Do not, however, let the romance overwhelm your common sense. If you do decide to have sex, you should make sure that it is protected sex.

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

Every region has its own unique health challenges. We strongly recommended that you consult with a travel clinic or physician who can look at your travel itinerary and your personal health profile and work with you to devise a health strategy for your travel, including all appropriate vaccinations, medications, and treatment options.

To locate a travel clinic, as well as information on destinations, outbreaks, diseases, vaccinations, insect protection, safe food and water, and medical emergency preparation: The Center for Disease Control: [http://www.cdc.gov/travel/](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/).

Disease maps; health risks and precautions; travel by air; environmental health risks; accidents, injuries and violence; infectious diseases; vaccine-preventable diseases; malaria; blood transfusions, etc.: [http://www.who.int/en/](http://www.who.int/en/).

MEDICATIONS

If you take them regularly, you should bring enough prescription and/or essential over-the-counter medication to last for the duration of your program. It is important to bring sufficient supplies since medications that you purchase overseas are not regulated in the same manner, e.g. by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. In addition, your overseas destination may not be able to dispense or sell the medications or other items that you require. You must also keep your medications in their original labeled containers during your travels; this will help with Customs and other border crossings. Before you depart, it is also essential that you know if the medicines, syringes, health aids that you plan to bring with you are legal in your destination country: what is legal in the U.S. can be considered illegal elsewhere.
IMMUNIZATIONS

Check with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for any recommended or required vaccinations you may need during your Study Abroad experience. Health risks may be very different depending on what country(ies) you plan on traveling to.

SPECIAL MEDICAL CONDITIONS/NEEDS

If you have any allergies or special conditions that might lead to sudden illness (such as asthma, diabetes, bee sting, penicillin allergies, etc.) you must inform the CIE of possible reactions. You should also consider discussing these with roommates or other friends you have made at your host university so that other people will know how to react in case you suddenly need assistance or medication. If you have any critical medications, you must carry them with you at all times and should report these medications to the CIE. The CIE also recommends that students consider wearing a medical alert bracelet describing any special medical conditions.

If you have asthma, even if you have not had any problems for years, you should bring an inhaler and all the necessary medications because it is possible for asthma to act up in the different environments where your Study Abroad programs is held.

If you have a disability, it is important that you contact the CIE to discuss your situation in confidence and provide appropriate documentation so that the feasibility of accommodation abroad can be evaluated as soon as possible. In advance of that discussion, you will want to register and meet with the Office of Student Disability Services in Copernicus Hall, Room 241.

FOOD

To avoid illness, travelers should be advised to select food with care. All raw food is subject to contamination. Particularly in areas where hygiene and sanitation are less prevalent, the traveler should avoid salads, uncooked vegetables, and unpasteurized milk and milk products such as cheese, and to eat only food that has been cooked and is still hot or fruit that has been peeled by the traveler personally. Undercooked and raw meat, fish, and shellfish can carry various intestinal pathogens. Cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours at ambient temperature can provide a fertile medium for bacterial growth and should be thoroughly reheated before serving. Consumption of food and beverages obtained from street food vendors has been associated with an increased risk of illness.

FINANCIAL CONCERNS

ESTIMATED COSTS

Inform yourself of the exchange rate(s) for the U.S. dollar before you go. As a general note, prices abroad are quite a bit higher than in the U.S. Total estimated costs will vary significantly with each individual’s pre- and post-program travel plans, souvenir and equipment purchases, and expenses during days off, or weekly incidentals such as snacks, entertainment, etc.

ATMs

The easiest and most economical way to obtain local currency is with through an ATM using your debit card or, in an emergency, a major credit card. If you arrive without cash, you should be sure to get some at an ATM once you arrive at the airport, but do NOT carry large sums of cash. Be aware that ATMs in many countries overseas only withdraw from checking accounts, not from savings accounts.
CREDIT CARDS

Note that personal checks are not accepted overseas, even by banks, and U.S. Traveler’s Checks are inconvenient to process when making purchases. Major credit cards are generally accepted abroad and cash advances are possible with Visa, MasterCard, or Cirrus at ATMs (make sure you have a pin number for your credit card). Before you leave, be sure to inform your bank or credit card company about your plans to travel. AMEX (American Express) and Discover are not widely accepted abroad.

COSTS OF SPECIAL DIETARY/RELIGIOUS NEEDS

Be prepared to bear any additional costs associated with vegetarianism, veganism, kosher meals, or any other special dietary requirements. If you have questions regarding special dietary or religious needs and/or about a religious holiday, which falls during your program time, you may want to contact your host university for information on alternate dining options.

OBTAINING A REFUND FOR YOUR PURCHASES – VAT TAX INFO

Value Added Tax (VAT) is sales tax that you pay overseas on manufactured goods and can be quite high in some countries. If you do any extensive shopping, you may be able to get a refund for the VAT; the process is free and the refund is easy to claim. You just have to bring your passport along on your shopping trip, get the necessary documents from the retailer, and track down the right folks at the airport, port, or border when you leave.

To get any refund, your purchase has to be above a certain amount — ranging from about $30 to several hundred dollars, depending on the country (except in Ireland, which has no minimum). Typically, you must ring up the minimum at a single retailer, on the same day — you can't add up your purchases from various shops to reach the required amount — so if you're doing a lot of shopping, you'll benefit from finding one spot where you can buy big. You need to collect your refund within three months of your purchase.
COMMUNICATION

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

It is advisable to look up the emergency numbers for the area which you will be visiting as “911” is not a universal number for emergencies. All students participating in CCSU Study Abroad programs are required to give the CIE full contact information (name, address, cell phone) of at least two emergency contacts. Please also consider registering on the U.S. Department of State’s free “Travel Registration” page at https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/. This will allow the Department of State to assist you should it be necessary.

MAIL

Make sure your friends and family know your foreign address. You should carry it with you when you travel, too. The average one-way travel time for airmail varies depending on what country you will be staying in. Let family and friends know that they should not send any mail during the last weeks of your stay overseas because you may not receive it in time.

Some countries have a number of strictly enforced prohibitions on items that may be mailed into the country; know what these are before you depart. Packages may be opened and examined by Customs officers and if any of the prohibited items are included they may be confiscated or subject to quarantine. This will cause severe delays and the possibility that the addressee will be subject to a fee for these prohibited items as well as the possibility that the package will never be received. Typical care package items, such as small amounts of clothing, packaged food, and personal hygiene items, are usually not taxed when mailed. However, any expensive items may be subject to import duty, usually around 30% of the proven value. You will be liable for any duty charges on items that you receive and normally packages cannot be sent back without paying the duty. This may be avoided if you write “gift” on the outside of the package and do not itemize the contents.

TELEPHONE

If you intend to bring your U.S. mobile phone to use overseas, you should speak with your carrier about purchasing a plan for international calling, texting, and data usage. If you do not have a plan that includes international usage, your charges can become alarmingly expensive. Alternatively, many smartphones, such as the Apple iPhone, can be used over wi-fi connections while cellular service is turned off. In this capacity, these phones can be used wherever you can connect to a wi-fi network. When connected, a number of applications can be used to place calls for free or at very low rates (e.g. Skype). Pay-as-you-go mobile phones can also be purchased in your host country. Lastly, pre-paid calling cards offer reasonable rates for placing calls from landlines and payphones. Students should purchase these cards once they arrive at their location since most U.S. calling cards can only be used to call from U.S. phones. When securing one of these calling cards, verify that the card can be used for placing calls from the country(ies) where you plan to be phoning from.

INTERNET

Internet access is usually available in computer labs at universities where students study abroad. Many campuses have wi-fi networks for students to access while on campus. An increasing number of dorm accommodations provide internet access to residents. These provisions are becoming more and more common worldwide. Additionally, internet cafés, which will allow patrons to purchase internet access by certain time increments, are located in many cities and towns. Internet cafés are a perfect place to quickly check your email and update friends and family on your location when travelling without a laptop or smartphone.
PRIVACY POLICY (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. In compliance with the law, CCSU requires written permission from a student before releasing any type of information from the student's education record.

Since the Center for International Education abides by this policy, our staff will not discuss – with a parent, relative, or other third party – any aspect of a student’s participation in a study abroad program without receiving a FERPA Release form (available from the Registrar’s Office). Faculty advisors and faculty leading overseas programs must also comply with the Federal law to avoid personal liability.

BREAKS BETWEEN SEMESTERS

Depending on what program you study abroad on and how long you stay, you may have a break between semesters or a mid-semester break, during which time you are free to leave the program and travel on your own or in a group. You are responsible for yourself during this time. You are advised to travel in groups of two or more and prepare emergency contact numbers to carry with you during the break. You should also leave an itinerary with a friend or family member, with phone numbers where possible, prior to leaving.
STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

CCSU’s Student Code of Conduct travels with you when you study abroad. You are responsible for holding yourself to the same standards of conduct as if you were on campus. You are representing yourself, CCSU, and the U.S. while abroad, so represent us well. Don’t forget that you are a guest in your host country and are subject to the laws of the land on whose soil you are standing. Use your common sense about what is right and wrong, legal and illegal. If something is illegal in the U.S., it is probably illegal abroad and just because something is legal in the U.S. does not mean it is legal abroad. If you are arrested and given the opportunity to make a phone call (not guaranteed), call the U.S. Embassy; they are the closest to you and your best initial advocate and source of information. You can find legal information for the country you are visiting at http://www.studentsabroad.com/foreignlaws.asp.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF FACULTY AND CCSU

Please know that CCSU:

- Cannot guarantee or ensure the safety of participants or eliminate all risks from the study abroad environments.
- Cannot monitor or control all of the daily personal decisions, choices, and activities of individual participants.
- Cannot prevent participants from engaging in illegal, dangerous or unwise activities.
- Cannot ensure that U.S. standards of due process apply in overseas legal proceedings or provide or pay for legal representation for participants.
- Cannot ensure that home country cultural values and norms will apply in the host country.
- Cannot fully replicate home campus support services at overseas locations.
- Cannot assume responsibility for the actions of persons not employed or otherwise engaged by the CIE, for events that are not part of the program, or that are beyond the control of the CIE and its subcontractors, or for situations that may arise due to the failure of a participant to disclose pertinent information.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

DEFINING CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

The process of cultural adjustment can be described as follows:

Arrival: Upon arrival, many students are exhilarated by the hundreds of new sights, sounds, and smells of their host country. You may feel physically exhausted from the travel, and you may need to give your body time and care to help it adjust to the different weather, geographic conditions, food, and time schedule. During this initial period, you may experience a variety of heightened emotions.

Culture Shock: After the initial high period, you may begin to notice the many differences between your home in the U.S. and your temporary home abroad. Processing these differences may be difficult and many students report emotions of anxiety, stress, confusion, homesickness, and discouragement, hostility toward the local culture and customs, and even depression. You may experience physical symptoms such as colds, headaches, or stomach upsets. On the other hand, some students experience very little culture shock.

Recovery: Fear not! With effort and time, you will get your legs back under you again. You may wish to employ some of the coping strategies listed in the next section, or find your own way to regain and rethink equilibrium.

Adaptation: At this stage, students have renegotiated belief systems and “the way things are done”. You may feel at home in your residence abroad.
Returning Home: Some students find that just when they have become comfortable with their surroundings abroad, it is time to return home! Because you are traveling back to a familiar place, you may not expect to experience reverse culture shock, which mirrors the culture shock process. Many students find re-entry to be more difficult than their adjustment to their temporary home abroad. The best way to smooth the reverse culture shock process is to prepare for it before, during, and after your time abroad. Make sure to share your experiences and personal development with important family and friends so that they can take part in your growth! Continuous communication in a spirit of sharing (rather than expecting or needing others to understand) will greatly smooth the reentry process.

COPING WITH CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

- Keep a journal. Be your own best counselor and write about the experiences, emotions, and thoughts that you have.
- Take care of your physical body. Be sure to get sufficient exercise, and take care of your body’s nutritional needs. Get enough rest and sleep.
- Communicate. If you are feeling particularly down, approach a friend, staff member, or mentor. Sometimes just talking about difficulties you are facing makes the burden seem lighter. Many of the people surrounding you at the Center have experienced or are experiencing the same cultural adjustment process as you. There is strength and comfort in sharing!
- Step out of your comfort zone. When everything around us is new, we sometimes just want to withdraw. Although some level of withdrawal can be helpful, in the end, there is more joy in living fully than hiding from fear. Do not do anything unreasonably risky or foolish, but practice your Spanish skills with community members. Try delicious foods you had never heard of before. Travel with friends during the mid-semester break. Take advantage of your abroad experience, because you will not have the same exact opportunity again!
- Breathe! The simple act of inhaling and exhaling a few times will help clear your mind.
- Keep in touch with family and friends at home. Regularly sharing your experiences will help ease the reentry process. However, be aware of spending too much time on the phone or internet to the detriment of your abroad experience.
- Remember to be grateful for what you have. A sense of gratitude makes cultural adjustment easier because of a positive outlook. You will see things in a more positive light, and those you meet will respond to you more positively because they can sense your humility and good feelings.

There are a multitude of ways that people cope, and you may discover other strategies that work particularly well for you.

A NOTE TO WOMEN AND DIVERSE STUDENTS

What it means to identify as LGBT, a woman, a person of color, a member of a certain religious group, a participant with a disability, etc. may be very different in your host country than at home. For example, a gay student may find that the host community is much less accepting of homosexuality than his university community. Asian or Asian-American students may find that host nationals, who perhaps have had little or no contact with Asians, view them as exotic. Students who are accustomed to being part of the majority group at home (e.g. Caucasian students) may need to readjust to living as a minority abroad. The change may be for better or for worse, but you might not be treated or viewed in the way that you are accustomed to at home.

There is more information about women and underrepresented students traveling abroad than it is possible to cover in this section. Please use the resources below to better inform yourself as you prepare for your abroad experience.

- GLBT Students, Students with Disabilities, Multicultural Students (University of Minnesota’s Learning Abroad Center): [http://www.umabroad.umn.edu/students/identity.php](http://www.umabroad.umn.edu/students/identity.php)
- Ethnic Minorities (All Abroad): [http://allabroad.us/](http://allabroad.us/)
- Students with Disabilities (Mobility International USA): [http://www.miusa.org/](http://www.miusa.org/)
“UNPACKING” YOUR EXPERIENCE WHEN YOU RETURN

The time you spend abroad will change your life and you will be enthusiastic about how you have grown as a person. What you will see and learn is invaluable and can set you ahead of the pack in the job market, yet many students find it difficult to articulate exactly how their experience overseas can translate into relevant job skills.

The CIE, in collaboration with CACE and the Department of Modern Languages offers a workshop entitled “Unpacking Your Study Abroad” which is designed for recent returnees. Once you return to CCSU, the CIE will contact you with an invitation. At the workshop, you will learn how to effectively convey the benefits of your studies abroad in interviews and in your résumé.

While abroad, it will help you to be a proactive observer of how your experiences will give you an advantage in the job market that you could not have gotten in the traditional classroom. Think specifically about how your interactions in the classroom and in public will help you get ahead in your future academic and career endeavors.

Thank you for enrolling in one of CCSU’s Study Abroad programs! We hope this Survival Guide was helpful in preparing you for your trip. If after reading it you still have questions about your participation in your Study Abroad program, please contact the Center for International Education at 860-832-2040 or by email to ebeecher@ccsu.edu.